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Red Science: Room for Truth

CPYRGHT

Few people are as directly responsible for finding out about and assessing the strength and weakness of a potential enemy as Allen Dulles, brother of the Secretary of State and head of the Central Intelligence Agency. In all sorts of ways, not so much by cloak and dagger espionage, as by careful study and correlation of published facts, his bureau endeavors to learn what is really going on in Russia.

In a recent address, he repeated what is now becoming a familiar warning: the truth of which the apparently penetrated the Defense Department to judge by the recent order to speed up airplane production. We should not disparage Soviet education nor the results it has obtained in the scientific field.

This country's intelligence experts have been at times surprised at the progress shown by the Russians in the aviation, nuclear and electronic fields. Soviet mathematics and meteorology appear to be clearly on a par with those of the West and even ahead in some respects.

For some time now, this sort of appraisal of Russian scientific knowledge and technique has been given us by calm and sober people who should know what they are talking about. We have been slow in appreciating it because we have listened too eagerly in times past to tales of Russian scientists who had been advanced or condemned because their "science" did or did not correspond with the party line.

However, intelligence authorities in this country have recently been giving close attention and study to the Russian educational system. They have discerned what Dulles called a "de-emphasis" upon ideology in the physical sciences. Physicists no longer have to worry whether their findings coincide with some politician's conception of what Karl Marx's philosophy required.

The most notorious example of

science becoming a political football was the Lysenko controversy where theories about genetics and plant development were tossed about to suit one of Stalin's proteges. Dulles is of the opinion that the objectivity which military requirements, if nothing else, have imposed upon the physical sciences, is to be found in other branches of knowledge, such as biology and agriculture. He expected that this freedom to seek truth would spread elsewhere, even to the hallowed field of economics.

Here is a real possibility of a change in the Russian system. More Russian young people than ever before are obtaining higher knowledge. Their teachers in some fields are freer than before to pursue the truth rather than to keep their students indoctrinated. This freedom can be contagious. And contacts with the West have been increasing in the last two years.

It is too early to expect any kind of revolutionary change on Soviet practice from this rise in the educational level. Soviet leaders still desire to keep their citizens as well-conditioned and indoctrinated members of a Communist state. But there is a real conflict between this desire and the necessity of training capable people for a technically advanced society.

Russia's scientific strength would possibly bring about the exposure of its ideological weakness. A simpler way to realizing this is to remember the religious doctrine that the truth will make us free. We cannot be certain that the power-holder in Moscow will not find some way to solve this dilemma which Dulles has exposed. They are masters of propaganda and indoctrination. Yet even here they are guilty of mistakes. Hitler always said the same thing over and over again. People believed him. Lately the Russians have been contradicting themselves. Thereby truth still has a chance, even in Russia.